

FORUM

Feminist Journalism on Work, War, and Women's Rights in the Third Republic

Popular Legal Journalism in the Writings of Maria Vérone

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In 1932, the French League for Women's Rights (*Ligue française pour le droit des femmes* or LFDF) sold an unusual example of feminist humor, a board game titled "The Game of the Luxembourg Geese." This game was created in response to the French Senate's unwillingness to pass a women's suffrage bill. The game featured a design reminiscent of traditional French board games with spiraling, numbered steps from the start to the finish. The objective of the game, however, was anything but ordinary. The player was instructed not to stop on the pieces celebrating the achievements of Frenchwomen because "they do not count" while simultaneously playing to defend "the republic from the Church and 'birth hysteria.'" ¹ A statement by Victor Hugo appears in the center of the game in which he condemned the inequities faced by women who "do not count" as citizens, and called for equal rights. ² Lawyer and feminist activist Maria Vérone's likeness was prominently displayed on the last game piece where she was quoted: "Long live the republic all the same!" a protest she shouted in the Luxembourg Palace after the senators defeated women's suffrage in a vote of 158 to 134. ³ In

¹ Advertisement on the back cover of *Le Droit des femmes*, September-October 1932. Game instructions in Alban Jacquemart, "Les hommes dans les mouvements féministes français (1870-2010). Sociologie d'un engagement improbable" (Ph.D. dissertation, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2011), 95.

² Hugo's statement originally appeared in a letter to Léon Richer. Quoted in Joyce Elizabeth Dixon-Fyle, *Female Writers Struggle for Rights and Education for Women in France (1848-1871)* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 139.

³ The origins of this particular protest, now associated with the French Resistance, are a bit unclear. One earlier use was by Jérôme Napoléon, cousin to Napoléon

this depiction, the Senate's failure to approve women's rights legislation made it comically out of touch with the contemporary populace. The game was available for sale in the offices of the LFDF in paper or cardboard versions for two or four francs, respectively.⁴

This game provides a touchstone from the interwar period when feminists became increasingly militant in their fight for women's rights. While humor provided an outlet for the frustrations experienced by reformers, the goals of the women's rights campaign were substantive. Vérone (1874-1938), a leader of the suffrage movement, believed that the formal enfranchisement of women and the profound reform of law and legislation along egalitarian lines were the only ways to fulfill the promise of the French Republic. She was certain that women would make a positive impact on society, politics, and law if they were only given the opportunity to participate in public life on an equal footing with men. A primary way she articulated her ideals was through popular journalism. The central purpose of this article is to examine Vérone's interwar writings to describe the development of her type of popular journalism: that of "feminist legal journalism." This style of journalism was not unique to Vérone but exemplified in her work. Vérone's own purpose in writing was political: to use the power of the popular press to change laws, soften hearts, and promote gender equality in modern French society.

During the belle époque, Vérone, a young freethinker and socialist, joined the growing ranks of female journalists.⁵ After Vérone was fired from her teaching job because she gave an anti-clerical speech on secular education, she was fortunate to land a reporter's position at Marguerite Durand's all-female newspaper *La Fronde*.⁶ In the late 1890s, starting at the age of twenty-three, she wrote about legal topics under the pseudonym "Themis," the Greek goddess of good council and social order. Vérone and her colleagues were pioneers who, as Steven Hause noted, "forced exclusively masculine institutions such as the stock exchange to accredit women as journalists for the first time."⁷ At the fin de siècle, Vérone was also one of the few women who secured admission to professional

III. See *Dictionnaire de l'histoire de France* (Paris: Larousse, 2005), s.v. "Napoléon (Jérôme Joseph Charles Paul Napoléon, dit le prince)," 865.

⁴ Game co-produced by the satirical newspaper *Le martinet*.

⁵ On Vérone and the freethinkers, see Jacqueline Lalouette, *La libre pensée en France: 1848-1940* (Paris: Bibliothèque Albin Michel Histoire, 1997), 93 and Fédération française de la libre-pensée, *Ligue anti-cléricale. Bulletin mensuel de correspondance des groupes et adhérents fédérés* (Paris, 1890).

⁶ Vérone worked as an assistant instructor (*institutrice adjointe*) from 1894 until 1897 when she was fired after speaking on behalf of the *Cercle d'enseignement laïc*.

⁷ Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 35.

associations including the Parisian Municipal Press Union (*Syndicat de la presse municipale parisienne*), and the Cofraternal and Mutual Association of the Parisian Judicial Press (*Association confraternelle et mutuelle de la presse judiciaire parisienne*). V rone entered law school while simultaneously working for *La Fronde* (1897-1905), and serving as LFDF general secretary. She completed her law degree in 1907 and became the fifth woman to join the Paris bar. Despite the fact that Jeanne Chauvin (1862-1926) had opened the legal profession to all women in 1900, V rone was considered the true *doyenne* of the bar because she developed a successful career and forged a stellar reputation as a lawyer while mentoring her younger colleagues from France and Algeria.⁸ V rone's admission to the bar did not diminish her interest in journalism but it did change her focus. She no longer worked as an investigative reporter but continued as a columnist providing expert legal advice and political commentary.

During her forty-year long journalistic career, V rone wrote for at least sixteen journals, published four books and pamphlets, and contributed chapters to three additional books. Her articles and columns appeared in over sixteen centrist or left-wing newspapers including *L'Oeuvre*, *Le Matin*, *La Paix*, *La Bataille Syndicaliste*, *La France Libre*, and others from the women's press with feminist leanings: *La Fran aise*, *Le Journal des femmes*, *Minerva*, and *L'Action f ministe*. Her articles generally addressed legal and political issues rather than topics in popular culture.⁹ Her preference for such subjects reflects her own interests and her ideological commitments. Her huge corpus of articles—numbering perhaps 1,500—may also signal that journalism was an outlet for her thwarted ambition to pursue a doctorate in law that she could not afford as a divorced mother of two young children without external financial support.¹⁰

V rone's most significant writing as an essayist and journalist appeared during the interwar period after a decade of professional legal experience and her election to the presidency of the republican LFDF. In 1920, she published her most important book: *La femme et la loi* (*Woman and the Law*).¹¹ Composed in unpretentious language, this work addressed issues of civil law, labor legislation, institutions of social assistance, and penal law. Under family law topics, she discussed the habitual matters of the courts: divorce, paternal power, paternity suits, and property. This otherwise objective and practical text was injected with

⁸ Maurice Hamburger, '*La robe noire*' ou la tradition lib rale de l'ordre des avocats (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1937), 170-176.

⁹ V rone wrote about female teachers in "Les institutrices c l bres," *Le Journal du dimanche : gazette hebdomadaire de la famille*, 17 and 31 January 1904.

¹⁰ M. Morey, "Il y a cent un ans naissait Maria V rone," *Le Droit des femmes*, October 1975, 6-10.

¹¹ Maria V rone, *La femme et la loi* (Paris: Larousse, 1920).

modest calls to action, such as an appeal to working women to demand their right to equal pay for equal work through unions, and a defense of married women's rights to an independent nationality.¹² In her treatment of criminal law, she underscored the fact that while the law generally meted out the same punishments for men and women, this did not hold true in cases of adultery. Labeling this inequality as an injustice, this book served the same purpose as her journalism: to educate the reader on the gendered nature of the law and make a case for reform.

Vérone's most significant interwar contributions to feminist legal journalism were published in the LFDF's monthly periodical, *Le Droit des femmes* and Gustave Téry's left-wing daily newspaper, *L'Oeuvre*. She began publishing in *Le Droit des femmes* around 1904 and, by 1919, she had assumed editorial control. As the interwar LFDF president and newspaper editor, Vérone wrote approximately twenty to twenty-five editorials and articles a year over twenty years, resulting in perhaps four hundred to five hundred articles. The periodical focused on political news about the women's rights movement, and featured editorials, speeches, parliamentary updates, and reprinted news from across the press. *Le Droit des femmes* was an important outlet for discussions about gender discrimination, served to voice feminist protest, and functioned as a watchdog of women's equal rights. The articles attempted to speak to the bourgeoisie and the working classes and cover both national and international events. This periodical is worthy of a critical reevaluation in part because it was extraordinary on the landscape of French journalism – focusing on political and legal news of women with a clear ideological commitment. Moreover, it also enjoyed extraordinary longevity: one hundred years of nearly continuous publication (1869-1971).

The LFDF's paper did not aspire to comprehensive news coverage, but its content went deeper than simple feminist propaganda. Vérone steered the magazine so it became an exemplar of the feminist editorial press by an intertwining analysis of gender relations with a critique of society and law. The editorial press in France functioned to defend values and ideals and provided diversity in social and political debates at a time when periodicals were frequently ideological and often aligned with political parties. A case can be made elsewhere to categorize *Le Droit des femmes* as a "*journal de combat*" (combative journal) that fought for a republican feminist worldview just as *L'Humanité* advocated socialism, and the weekly *Je suis partout* promoted fascism.¹³ *Le Droit des*

¹² Vérone, *La femme et la loi*, 30-32.

¹³ See Lars A. Peterson, "The Age of the Weekly: Contesting Culture in the *Hebdomadaires Politico-Littéraires* (1933-1940)," (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 2003).

femmes reinforced its conviction that women could and should engage in intellectual and political pursuits as the editor featured articles on legal and political news while avoiding the domestic arts and many aspects of popular culture. Precise circulation data for *Le Droit des femmes* has yet to be located; however, membership in the LFDF between 1919 and 1922 was approximately one thousand.¹⁴ Readers could subscribe to or purchase a single sixteen-page issue for one franc in the 1920s, or two francs by the mid-1930s. Despite the paper's lofty political aspirations, the circulation was likely modest.

By contrast, Vérone's weekly column published in *L'Oeuvre* had the potential to reach a wide audience. By 1919, *L'Oeuvre* enjoyed a daily circulation of over one hundred and thirty-five thousand, which had climbed to two hundred and thirty thousand by 1936.¹⁵ This put the paper in the middle-ranks of Parisian newspapers.¹⁶ Vérone published approximately five hundred articles in *L'Oeuvre* alone. Vérone's regular column ran from 1926 to 1936 on Wednesday, where she typically offered legal advice and provided socio-political commentary, promoted feminism, and called for legal reforms to improve the treatment of women and children in society. Consequently, Vérone's name became widely known to readers in France and beyond.¹⁷ The articles analyzed for this research can be loosely grouped into three categories: first, discussions of women's inequality under the law; second, a critique of the judiciary; and third, the role of feminism in addressing legal questions.

Never an elitist, Vérone approached knowledge of the law and politics not as idle concerns but as matters that spelled real differences in the lives of ordinary people. Many of her articles functioned to advocate for prostitutes, illegitimate children, single mothers, and the working poor. She wrote to give readers the tools to stay on the better of side of the gap between economic precariousness and security while favoring women's autonomy over dependence. She would rather have unmarried mothers, for example, reclaim pride in motherhood than give in to social shame. She argued against weak laws, such as the law which legalized paternity suits (1912), as inadequate to hold most men responsible for the abandonment of mothers and their out-of-wedlock babies. In a daring 1922 article addressing the birthrate and so-called illegitimate children, published two years after contraceptives were banned in France, she defended

¹⁴ Hause, *Women's Suffrage*, 213.

¹⁵ Archives nationales, "Fonds *L'Oeuvre*," *Les fonds d'archives de presse conservé aux Archives nationales (site de Paris), série AR* (Paris: Archives nationales de France, 2010), 9.

¹⁶ Gustave Téry founded *L'Oeuvre* (1904) as a monthly publication, and it was published subsequently as a weekly (1910) and then a daily paper (1915).

¹⁷ Harold Denny, "Women of France: War on Tradition," *New York Times*, 11 November 1923.

women's rights to control their own fertility.¹⁸ She appealed to readers to see the point of view of a mother, who is pregnant, poor, perhaps unmarried, and who considered the terrible choice between abortion and infant abandonment. V rone believed that if society changed its attitudes, laws, and policies towards natural children and accepted them, it could usher in a new phase of "triumphant and redemptive maternity."¹⁹ Her solution to abortion and depopulation was to respect women and empower them with useful knowledge and effective legal tools.

V rone's feminist legal journalism brought women's concerns to the forefront while exploring the conflict between existing laws and the reality of women's lives. Her emphases on women's legal problems and the political attempts to address them were central to the reform-oriented purpose of her writing. During the 1920s, for example, V rone wrote frequently about the limitations on married women's rights under the Civil Code. In one such case, the Appeals Court considered a married woman's right to privacy. In this trial, a husband had requested that his wife's doctor provide a medical certificate that he could then use in support of his divorce claim. The Court rejected this man's request when it decided that the husband did not have such superior rights over his wife that he could compel the doctor to undermine the principle of privacy sacred within the medical profession.²⁰ V rone praised the Appeals Court for recognizing limits on spousal authority and also commented on the greater need for the legislature to recognize women's legal autonomy under the law. In another case involving the role of spousal authority in a woman's right to work, the case went all the way to the Court of Cassation. The court confirmed that a married woman had the right to control her own finances under the law of 13 July 1907, but it did not eliminate the requirement that spouses grant approval for their wives' right to work. V rone argued that although the courts had recognized women's rights, the legislature lagged behind. The law of 1907, she argued, should be amended to recognize a married woman's right to contract her employment without the authorization of her husband.²¹

V rone also criticized the organization of the courts and its treatment of defendants. She was particularly concerned with the problems of juvenile justice,

¹⁸ On reproductive rights see Elinor A. Accampo, "The Gendered Nature of Contraception in France: Neo-Malthusianism, 1900-1920," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 2 (2003): 235-62.

¹⁹ Maria V rone, "Pour emp cher l'avortement. Respectons les m res," *L'Oeuvre*, 6 July 1922.

²⁰ Maria V rone, "Notes d'une avocate. Le droit du mari," *Le Droit des femmes*, April 1920, 309-10.

²¹ Maria V rone, "Notes d'une avocate. Le contrat de travail de la femme mari e," *Le Droit des femmes*, February 1927, 51-52.

a field to which she dedicated much of her reform efforts outside the women's rights movement. Before the First World War, she had rallied the LFDF to campaign for the national law of 22 July 1912 that created the juvenile courts and its probation system. During the interwar period, V rone used the press to argue for the implementation of effective measures of juvenile rehabilitation and re-education to prevent recidivism.²² Moreover, she advocated for the greater employment of women in the French juvenile courts, arguing that it had already proven efficacious in the United States, Belgium, Poland, and Scandinavia.²³

V rone's articles also promoted the ability of the organized feminist movement to address socio-legal injustices. In addition to her leadership of the LFDF, V rone also chaired the International Council of Women (ICW) Suffrage and Legislation Section where she researched women's rights in comparative perspective and promoted reform. Naturally, she reported on the ICW's efforts to support women's rights in the newspapers. In 1922, the ICW voted to support married women's right to work and endeavored to dismantle marriage bans where they existed.²⁴ Later, after France had enacted legislation in 1927 that permitted women to keep their nationality upon marriage with a foreigner under certain circumstances, V rone argued for the need to make this right universal. In 1930, she reported upon her own presentation before the delegates at the Hague Conference on the Codification of International Law. There she argued, "A woman should always have the right to maintain or change her nationality under the same conditions as the man."²⁵ She requested that the delegates formulate an agreement that would treat women better than "criminals."²⁶ Equal nationality laws would "help to prove that woman is no longer a chattel which the owner may dispose of as he thinks best, but a human being who, like a man is entitled to justice, freedom, independence, and I would say, the primary right of the human being: the right to a country."²⁷ Normally optimistic, she lamented in *L'Oeuvre* about the difficulty she faced persuading the delegates to accept her arguments.²⁸

²² On V rone's role in the development of the juvenile courts see Sara L. Kimble, "No Right to Judge: Feminism and the Judiciary in Third Republic France," *French Historical Studies* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 609-41.

²³ Maria V rone, "Juges pour enfants," *L'Oeuvre*, 18 June 1930.

²⁴ Maria V rone, "Le conseil international des femmes," *L'Oeuvre*, 25 May 1922.

²⁵ League of Nations, *Acts for the Conference for the Codification of International Law*, vol. 2 (The Hague, 1930), 180.

²⁶ Maria V rone, "  la conf rence de la Haye. La nationalit  de la femme mari e," *L'Oeuvre*, 19 March 1930.

²⁷ League of Nations, *Acts for the Conference*, 180.

²⁸ V rone, "  la conf rence de la Haye," *L'Oeuvre*, 19 March 1930.

French legal journalism across the ideological spectrum was concerned with discussions of legislation, justice, and social morality. The fact that such topics are considered legal journalism, rather than relegated to political journalism or social commentary, is a consequence of the place of law within French society. Such debates might strike contemporary readers as a category better segregated to specialized periodicals but in the early twentieth century, news of the law could be found in daily and weekly newspapers and monthly magazines. Legal discussions had a place in ordinary papers because one of the central conceptions of the law in French society holds that the law was essential for creating justice. As legal historian René David noted, French law was based on “universality and... the perfection of a just society.”²⁹ David argued that the very purpose of the law in France was to create the social order through the articulation of its principles. Thusly, the law also instructed citizens on proper behavior in accordance with communal ideas of morality and justice. As I argue elsewhere, feminist lawyers, with their allies in the women’s emancipation movement, sought to transform the law precisely because of its function as an expression of social morality, a guide to proper conduct, and an organizing principle for society.³⁰

In the early twentieth century, modern legal journalism developed under the writers whom historian Frédéric Chauvaud labeled “court chroniclers.” These almost exclusively male reporters adopted a novelistic-style to create “*la nouvelle chronique judiciaire*” (new legal chronicles) where they described court scenes and criminal cases with dramatic flourishes. These reporters wrote descriptions of criminal trials that conveyed an atmosphere of suspense and brought the personalities in the courtroom alive for their readers. Less frequently, the court chronicles addressed the functioning of the justice system, interpreted cases as cautionary tales, composed polemic essays on judicial errors, and provided instructions and advice to readers.³¹

Just as law had a place in French journalism, so politics had a role in the legal profession. Vérone’s involvement in journalism was not incongruent with her legal career. Lawyers in the French Third Republic were known for

²⁹ René David, *French Law: Its Structure, Sources, and Methodology*, trans. Michael Kindred (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 75.

³⁰ See Sara L. Kimble, “Justice Redressed: Women, Citizenship, and the Social Uses of the Law in Modern France, 1890-1939,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 2002), and Sara L. Kimble, “Feminist Lawyers and Political Change in Modern France, 1900-1940” in *Women in Law and Law-Making in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe*, ed., Eva Schandevyl (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming).

³¹ Frédéric Chauvaud, “‘Voir vite et juste,’ la nouvelle chronique judiciaire (1880-1940),” in *La Chronique judiciaire. Mille ans d’histoire*, eds. Sylvie Humbert and Denis Salas (Paris: La documentation française, 2010), 85.

participating in public life as politicians or public intellectuals. The statistical strength of jurists in the Chamber of Deputies from the 1880s to the 1920s (forty percent in 1881, thirty-seven percent in 1906, and twenty-eight percent in 1924) prompted historians to describe the government in these years as a “republic of lawyers.”³² The first generation of female lawyers was similarly motivated to participate in public affairs but their lack of political rights prevented them from ascending to the same heights of service. Consequently, Vérone used journalism to advocate for legal reform, democratize specialized legal knowledge, and disseminate legal news. From outside the halls of power, Vérone spoke the truth about women’s experiences in the hopes that her counsel could have a meaningful and lasting social impact on both readers and political leaders alike.

The intertwining of feminist activism with commentary on law and legislation was typical of Vérone’s style and its final form was arguably more radical than the approach of some of her colleagues. Suzanne Grinberg (1889-1972) and Yvonne Netter (1889-1985), two of the other feminist lawyers who also moonlighted as journalists, were more constrained in their feminist advocacy in their articles and advice columns. Grinberg’s exposé debating the future of the Civil Code published in *La France judiciaire*, for example, featured interviews with jurists, law professors, and lawyers but did not include her own viewpoint.³³ Netter wrote a legal advice column for *La Femme de France* that ran impressively from 1928 to 1937. She treated some of the standard topics of family law including prenuptial agreements, divorce, paternal power, paternity suits, married women’s right to earned income, and illegitimate children. Although Netter was a feminist and created her own working women’s club, the Foyer guide féminin, she rarely chose to make the role of the feminist movement explicit in her news column. Vérone, by contrast, regularly brought her articles back to the central ideal that society and the state must recognize women’s fundamental equality, reform the law, and extend all measure and policies that could ameliorate the condition of women and children in republican France. The minor distinctions among these feminist writers should not eclipse the fact that they were essentially united politically and stylistically compared with the typical court reporters of the same era.

³² Yves Gaudemet, *Les juristes et la vie politique de la III République* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 18, 95-97. Lawyers’ representation in the Senate was twenty-two to thirty-three percent during 1875 to 1921. See Gilles Le Béguec, “Prélude à la République des avocats,” in *Les immortels du Sénat 1875-1918: les cent seize inamovibles de la Troisième République*, eds. Jean Marie Mayeur, Alain Corbin, Arlette Schweitz (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995).

³³ Suzanne Grinberg, “Notre première enquête. Faut-il reviser le code civil?” *La France judiciaire*, 30 November 1930, 4.

Vérone was exemplary as an *avocate-engagée* (politically engaged lawyer) for whom all her public actions evidence her political priorities. In the first year of her legal career, Vérone established her professional reputation by defending antimilitarists and other political agitators. Politicking in the courtroom, however, was technically inappropriate, limited by the practical role of the lawyer, and circumscribed by the judges. Journalism and pamphlet-writing, by contrast, were more conducive to expressing political opinions. As a writer, Vérone assumed the persona of a public educator, composing her pieces in publicly accessible language. Most importantly, Vérone exemplified a cohort of female political actors who laid claim to the *Rights of Man* as their own. Feminist legal journalism was an important vehicle for this intellectual woman who helped to contribute to the transformation of gender roles and the education of the public during the interwar years.

Vérone's role as an activist-journalist should be contextualized within the long tradition of political pamphleteering and opposition journalism practiced by French lawyers in the early modern and modern period. Briefly, one can mention that in the beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, barristers protested the persecution of Jansenists by publishing briefs addressing audiences inside and outside the courtroom. At the time, legal briefs (*mémoires judiciaires*) were powerful documents, as they were uncensored and might be printed in the thousands. The barristers's provocations would become all the more important on the eve of the French Revolution when they contributed to the vanguard of reform.³⁴ Scholars document the reemergence of this activist tradition by politically-oriented lawyers in the nineteenth century when the lawyers appealed to the court of public opinion during *cause célèbres*.³⁵ As I argue elsewhere, feminist lawyers were also inspired by the revolutionary tradition and enacted their own political agendas in the twentieth century.³⁶

Journalists hold some power over the public image of law when they write about how it works, or does not, on behalf of its constituents. Vérone's articles were informed by a lawyer's view of the world that privileged the clients' experience and anticipated legal ramifications of cases going to court. Her journalistic articles were filled with life lessons that urged ordinary folks not to fall into predictable legal traps. If feminist legal journalism succeeded in demonstrating the utility of lawyers to society—primarily as legal counselors and political critics—then the reputation of the profession might well have received a

³⁴ David Avrom Bell, *Lawyers and Citizens: The Making of a Political Elite in Old Regime France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 81-104.

³⁵ On male lawyers' political engagement see Bernard Sur, *Histoire des avocats en France, des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Dalloz, 1997).

³⁶ See Kimble, "Feminist Lawyers" and Kimble, "No Right to Judge."

corresponding boost. V rone's altruistic efforts suggested that she was invested in pushing the profession away from its connotations as self-serving and apolitical, towards an image of lawyers who operated with a moral conscience on behalf of the disadvantaged.

In conclusion, the foray by feminist lawyers into journalism, as exemplified by V rone, had four consequences. First, feminist legal journalists attempted to redefine the legal profession as a helping profession. V rone presented herself as a lawyer who gave free advice on useful topics such as how to best secure a positive outcome in divorce cases, paternity suits, and property cases. Second, the articles indicate that she encouraged women to become more knowledgeable about the impact of the law on their lives. Third, V rone promoted a feminist vision, a feminist cause, and feminist organizations. In non-partisan newspapers, she might mention casually that certain organizations, such as the ICW or LFDF, were sponsoring legal reform on certain issues. This was a kind of propaganda that signaled her high estimation of the current activities of the national and international feminist movement as relevant to the lived-experience of her readers. Finally, journalistic activities benefited the female lawyer by helping her solidify a reputation as a legal expert. Moreover, journalism generated supplemental income. V rone was well known for taking on many pro bono cases and her regular earnings were plausibly modest as a consequence. Perhaps journalism helped the lawyer and her cause stay financially afloat.

The interwar era was a challenging time for the press. The number of daily newspapers declined while regional papers and political weeklies expanded.³⁷ Journalism went through an important period of professionalization in the early twentieth century and by the 1920s, the field had generally become professionalized and monopolized by a new breed of experts.³⁸ Although these years witnessed increased participation by women in journalism, the sources examined for this research show that women's interwar writing often conformed to an nineteenth century model. Under this latter model, journalism was performed in conjunction with the author's primary liberal profession (e.g., lawyer, professor, and publicist).³⁹ The history of feminist journalism raises questions about the potential impact of gender analysis on the accepted chronology.

³⁷ Christophe Charle, *Le si cle de la presse: 1830-1939* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 247.

³⁸ On expertise see Anne R. Epstein, "Gender and the Rise of the Female Expert during the Belle  poque," *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, soci t * 2, no. 14 (2011): 84-96.

³⁹ Charle, *Le si cle*, 143.

Feminist legal journalism filled a unique niche in the marketplace as it fit neither within the traditional feminine press that offered readers advice about health, beauty, fashion, and domesticity, nor within the political press oriented for a male readership. Historian Christophe Charle claimed that only “a minority of feminist militants” were interested in political news.⁴⁰ If this was true, were even fewer women interested in legal news? How do we explain the publication of the decade-long legal columns written by Maria Vérone and Yvonne Netter, and the regular articles written by at least another dozen other female lawyers if female readers were not interested in political news? Newspaper editors would presumably not have paid lawyer-journalists for their work if these articles were of no interest to the public. Perhaps feminist legal journalism, which was inherently political, did appeal to female audiences because of its content, substance, and authorship. For their part, the lawyer-journalists must have hoped that they were popularizing legal news and disseminating feminist humanism in popular formats. What is certain about the significance of women’s participation in journalism during the interwar period is that it served as an expression of their identity as citizens and intellectuals. As Vérone wrote about judicial affairs, she asserted her professional individuality along with her byline. In her hands, journalism became a political tool to reshape both law and society along egalitarian principles.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 189.